



The Idaho PC Users Group

PC Users Group

IBM PC Users Group  
P.O. Box 9136  
Boise, Idaho 83707

NEWSLETTER



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# Idaho IBM-PC Users Group Newsletter

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## NO MEETING IN JULY

Because of the large number of active members that are taking their vacations in July, this month we will not be meeting.

## NEXT MEETING

Date : Tuesday, August 6  
note this is the first  
Tuesday and not the second.

Time : 7:00pm

Place: Borah High School  
: B-Wing Room 126

## D I S C O U N T S

The following individuals and local merchants are offering discounts to any registered members.

Greg Penn (CompuShop). CompuShop is extending a 10% discount off the normal CompuShop retail price on all stock to registered IPUG members.

Bruce Burns (R&L Data) is personally extending a 15% discount off everything in the store, except the AT line, to all registered members.  
note: you must deal directly with Bruce.

Tim Mead (Computer Concepts) will offer the Leading Edge Word Processor, Speller and Mail Merge program to any card carrying member for \$175 which is \$75 off the normal price of \$250.

Borbaki Inc. will sell their Directory Command System called 1Dir (pronounced wonder), which normally retails for \$95, for \$75 to club members. Thanks to Chris & Cindy.

## RBASE 4000

Written By Kay Allphin

Rbase 4000 is a relational, single-user database management system distributed by Microrim of Bellevue, Washington. Rbase runs on 256K of memory and retails for \$495.00. Earlier versions of Rbase required a system disk in the floppy drive (on a hard disk system), but the latest version (1.13) is hard disk installable. Version 1.15 supports the AT.

An Rbase user may define up to 400 attributes (fields) per database, up to 1530 bytes of data per row (record length), and up to 2.5 billion rows (records) per relation. Users may combine or compare all or parts of the up to 40 relations per database. Relations are subsets of the database organized with attributes and rows. Allowable data types are: date, time, dollar, integer, text, and real.

Rbase comes complete with an excellent hands-on tutorial that permits the experimentation of a majority of Rbase functions. When done with the tutorial, users are able to create their own reports and perform ad-hoc selections and computations.

Security passwords may be set at the database level (read and write) as well as the relation level. The commands are like English (SELECT, SORTED BY, WHERE, etc. Rbase has on-line help and will display a screen of syntax for a particular command. Data entry

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## Rbase (from page one)

forms can be created as well your own rules (edits) to validate the data entered.

Rbase is able to retrieve and sort data very quickly and allows the building of key indexes that makes it even faster. In one of my databases of over 5000 records (532 record length) I am able to perform a selection using a key field, sort by one field, and one conditional in 34 seconds. Without key indexing, it takes about a minute.

The reports are created by basically "drawing" them on the screen, then positioning the fields where you want them to print. You may define variables, the number of lines per page, mark the report heading, footing, and detail, then store the whole layout. When you are ready to print, the report is referred to by name. The retrieval of data from a database does not require the creation of a report though. Queries are performed using a prompt screen and "filling in the blanks" or users can bypass the prompt screens and enter a single command line or lines. The commands SELECT, COMPUTE, and TALLY are used with the conditional WHERE command and separated by the Boolean operators AND and OR. Prior to any queries, users have the option to set the format of dates, set the number of lines that will print or display per page, the width of the output, etc. The output of any report or query can be directed to a disk file, the terminal, a printer or any combination of these.

Rbase has an editor (or you can use any other) to allow the creation of command files. Command files are used to store a series of commands that are used on a regular basis. A command file could be used to run a weekly report, to drive a system, bring up menus, ask for a user's

password, define variables, and more.

Rbase data can be transported easily into a Lotus spreadsheet, and the documentation supplies information as to the transfer of data to other packages.

The DOS commands DIR and TYPE may be issued within Rbase.

I have found Rbase to be a fast, powerful tool to manage large amounts of data. Every division of my department, Personnel, uses Rbase to help manage information more efficiently.

An enhanced version of Rbase 4000 (Rbase 5000) has been released recently. I understand many new capabilities have been added. After my copy arrives, I will be in a better position to provide an overview.

Editors note: Kay is the Supervisor of MK's Personnel Computer Systems Division and uses Rbase 4000 to develop database applications for the system's microcomputers. She is a computer professional who's expertise extends to mainframe systems. We are hoping we can persuade her to write a monthly PC-oriented column for our newsletter.

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## A NOTE ABOUT THE DISK LIBRARY

Any registered member is entitled to make copies of any or all of the programs in the program library. The cost is \$1.50 per copy and you supply your own diskette. You can get a copy of any program at the monthly meetings or by contacting Richard Chambers. There are some real useful utilities and programs to be found.

## THE STEERING COMMITTEE

It is completely impossible to please everyone in a group such as this, but we are trying. If you have some novel ideas for the group, or some reservations about the way the group is serving its members, please consider becoming involved in our steering committee. The steering committee normally meets on the tuesday following the group meeting. All members are welcome, and if you are interested in joining in on this meeting and helping to determine the direction and focus of the group, let us know. Those who express an interest are notified by phone of the time and place of the steering committee meeting each month.

During our last steering committee meeting, we:

- (1) Authorized Dave Jameson set up, and begin operating our group BBS.
- (2) Decided to try for a better mix between technical and non-technical presentations at the meetings, so as to make the meetings more satisfying for our less experienced users.
- (3) Decided to look for a centrally-located, permanent meeting place.
- (4) Voted to see if there is enough member interest in workshops on subjects such as Introduction to DOS, Basic BASIC, and Beginning dBase II to make them worthwhile.
- (5) Determined the presentation subjects for the next User Group meeting.

In addition, snacks and refreshments were served, and there was time to discuss subjects of personal interest with others who held varied viewpoints.

## GROUP PURCHASES AND DISCOUNTS

Written By Richard Chambers

I can't believe the response we had on our diskette offer. We sold nearly every one we purchased, even the majority of those we had slated for the library. This was an excellent opportunity for our members to purchase some quality diskettes at less than "bargain basement" prices, and the group even managed to make about nine cents per disk. Since the response was so overwhelming, we have ordered another 250 diskettes. Many of these are already spoken for, and more members are taking advantage of the offer all the time.

Our last order took less than two weeks, however this time, we were told that it will be on back-order. Even so, we hope to have them for distribution at the next meeting. If not, when they do arrive, I'll try to hand-deliver them as I did last time.

This brings up some other points; we are large enough an organization now that we are able to get some pretty good prices on smaller items such as diskettes and memory chips. Mike Hayhurst is also exploring the possibility of a group modem purchase. In order to get the best possible price on these modems, we would have to make a fairly sizable order. If you are interested in PC communications, or in upgrading your present modem to 1200 baud, this might be a fantastic opportunity for you to get into it with a minimal cash outlay. Contact Mike at the next meeting if this interests you. If you can think of other items you would like to be able to purchase through the group, bring your idea to the next meeting. Please keep in mind that we will be unable to inventory bulky products such as printer paper; we just don't have the space for it.

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**Group Purchases**  
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For "high-ticket" items such as printers, plotters, and computers; where the ability to get quality service, repair, and technical assistance might be paramount, we suggest that you take advantage of the excellent discounts offered our members by Bruce Burns of R&L Data, (15% on all but the AT line. NOTE: you must deal directly with Bruce to get this discount), and CompuShop, (10% on all non-sale items). As covered elsewhere in the newsletter, Bourbaki, Inc. is offering a considerable discount to our membership on the purchase of their 1dir software package. We are currently speaking to other computer equipment and supplies merchants in the local area, and hope to be able to announce additional sources of discounts for our card-carrying members in the near future. We are greatly encouraged by the level of support the group is receiving from our local business community.

A "CLASSIFIED" SECTION

Hope you noticed that we have a new section in the newsletter. Beginning with this issue, we will include items for sale by our members. If you have a piece of hardware or software lying around the house, and you think you might like to sell it, give us a call or drop us a line with your name and member number (the number on your blue card), and we will get it into the next edition of the newsletter for you at no charge. Please note that this applies to NON-COMMERCIAL advertisements only.

Members and Corporate Sponsors  
will receive special low rates for  
COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING.

For those of you who are not members, but would like to advertise

an item or service for sale in our newsletter, you may contact our editor, Bob Robles or myself for the appropriate rate. Or, drop us a letter with your advertising copy and phone number and we will advise you of the non-member rate. Our address may be found on the cover.

CLASSIFIED

\*\*\* FOR SALE \*\*\*

For the IBM or compatible:

1. FAST GRAPH PKG	\$35.00
2. HOME ACCT. PLUS	25.00
3. PERFECT CALC	35.00
4. PERFECT FILER	75.00
5. PERFECT WRITE/SPELL	85.00
6. PERFECT LINK	20.00
7. VOLKSMODEM 12 300/1200	210.00
8. IBM SERIAL CARD	50.00
9. IBM PARALLEL CARD	50.00

For the Apple or compatible:

1. SILENTYPE PRINTER W/CARD \$100.00  
If interested in the IBM or  
Apple equipment, contact Dave  
Jameson at 386-6137 days or  
376-2206 after work hours or  
weekends.

\*\*\*\*\* WANTED \*\*\*\*\*

Wish to purchase an expansion set for an IBM-PC Jr. Would like an additional 128K memory and a second disk drive. Please call Rick Barnes at 344-7914 during business hours.

\*\*\*\*\* FOR SALE \*\*\*\*\*

APPLE 80-COLUMN TEXT CARD for the Apple IIe, complete with documentation. Fits in Aux #3 slot. This is the small card with no additional memory aboard. \$40.00. Contact Rich Chambers 939-9120.

\*\*\*\*\* WANTED \*\*\*\*\*

Looking for an AST Six-Pac with 64K memory or less. Game Port not required. Contact Rich Brown at 386-5506 Days, or 322-7720 evenings.

CHIPS N' DIPS  
Written By Rich Brown

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## CHOOSING A PRINTER FOR YOUR IBM-PC

How can you, without spending days of research, determine which is the best printer to attach to your Personal Computer? There's no doubt that making a decision of this nature is at best confusing, given the hundreds of printers presently available. Printers are used in so many places and for so many applications that no one model - or even one technology answers all users' needs. For some people, speed is the deciding factor in a purchase. For others, it's print quality. For still others, cost is the most important consideration. Because printers fall into one of two major categories, impact and non-impact, this article, the first of two, will examine the impact-style printer and give the reader a variety of facts that will help to make the decision-making process a little easier.

Again, impact printers fall into two major types: (1) fully formed character printers and (2) dot-matrix printers. The fully-formed character printer is usually referred to as a "daisy wheel", owing to the similarity of the print wheel to the shape of a daisy, each "petal" on the wheel holding one character or symbol. In order to put characters on paper, fully-formed printers employ a mechanism for striking a piece of paper through a ribbon, similar to that used in a typewriter. This mechanism is usually an electro mechanical device that drives a print thimble, daisy wheel, print cup, or "golf-ball" element. What actually strikes the ribbon is a fully-formed character which in turn strikes the paper to form the character. The chief advantage of impact printing is the ability to print characters that

look like they were produced by a typewriter or printing press. Until recently, this type of print technology was the only one considered acceptable for business correspondence. Fully-formed character printers, while producing excellent print quality, are not without their drawbacks. These include relatively higher cost, high noise (db) levels, slower speed, and the inability to print graphics.

A second type of impact printer is the dot-matrix printer. This printer is much faster than the daisy wheel (or letter quality) printer and uses a set of pins that strike the ribbon in a pre-selected sequence or pattern to form each character. Besides being faster, one of the major advantages of the dot-matrix printer is its ability to print graphics, a feature not found on daisy wheel printers. If you're going to use your printer with a spreadsheet such as Lotus 1-2-3, and think you might want to print graphics, be sure your printer has this capability. The major drawback of this type of print technology is that it is unable to produce a fully formed character. However, in an effort to print characters more like those of the daisy wheel, manufacturers devised a way to produce higher quality print by shifting the print head slightly after the first pass and reprinting the character on a second pass. Another method used to produce higher quality print was to increase the number of pins in the matrix or "print head". This resulted in creating a higher dot density and a more fully-formed character that looked more like it was printed by a standard type-

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## Choosing a Printer (continued from previous page)

writer. The result of this effort was to create the term "near letter quality" of print produced. In most cases, printing speeds are faster than the daisy wheel printer. A typical dot-matrix printer is capable of running at 40 characters per second (cps) in correspondence mode, 80 cps in near-letter-quality mode, 160 cps in draft mode, and costs less than \$1000. In comparison, a typical daisy wheel printer runs at 40 cps and costs upwards of \$1500.

Before buying a printer, one of the most important considerations should be to determine that the software package(s) currently in use (and any considered for future purchase) will be compatible with the printer chosen. Although this may come as a surprise to some, most software packages support a limited number of printers. Consequently, not all software will run on just "any printer". However, some printers have emulation capabilities that allow them to act like the more popular printer brands that are likely to be supported by most software products.

Another consideration that should be given to any prospective printer purchase is buffer size. Buffers are memory storage areas that allow the printer to receive and store data sent to it by the PC. Because a printer can take data from a computer faster than it can print it, it is important that enough buffer space exist (usually 2K to 4K) to allow the transfer of data without slowing down the printer.

Most printers use one of two common interfaces to the PC. Centronics (parallel) or RS-232 (serial). These are standard interfaces for connecting the printer to the PC. As you can imagine, you must

use the correct cable bearing the proper connectors so that the printer will recognize the digital signals (representing data) sent to it by the PC.

The last item we'll discuss regarding impact printers are paper feed devices. All impact printers use at least one of three methods to move the paper through the printer as it's being printed upon: friction feed, pin-feed tractor, or adjustable-sprocket tractor. Friction feed is similar to the method used in a typewriter; the paper can be adjusted by moving the platen knob, and the friction between the paper and the platen allows the paper to be fed. A pin-feed tractor is a fixed-width tractor built into the edge of the platen that positions pins in the holes on the side of the paper and feeds the paper into the printer by rotating. An adjustable-sprocket tractor works like the pin-feed tractor except that it is adjustable for varying paper sizes.

Having discussed the major points of impact-style printers, the next article will give attention to their counterpart, non-impact printers and the latest technology involving printing using laser beams.

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**WHERE TO WRITE**  
Idaho IBM PC Users Group  
P.O. Box 9136  
Boise, Idaho 83707  
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Questions concerning the group can be directed to any of the following people:

President: Bruce Burns 322-4533  
Librarian: Richard Chambers 939-9120  
Treasurer: Tom McIntyre 344-7194  
Editor: Bob Robles 342-7250  
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THE LIBRARY CARD

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REVIEW: PC-FILE

PC-FILE is a slick little database written by Jim Button of Bellevue Washington. While not as extensive as a dBase II or dBase III, this is an easy to use program which will keep smaller files such as phone lists, client lists, and inventory lists in fine fashion. The program is written in assembler language, and is quite fast.

PC-FILE comes with an extensive set of instructions which are co-resident upon the disk. After you have made a hard-copy of this documentation file, you may remove it from the disk and reclaim the nearly 50,000 bytes used by this file. Or, if you wish, member Rich Brown has already put the documentation into "manual-form," and we have it available for checkout to our members. It is 3-hole punched, and copied front to back. Thus, all you must do is take it to your favorite copy shop, and have them run it off for you. The manual, as Rich has configured it, is 27 pages in length, looking professional in all respects. The program is quite easy to use, however, and forays to the manual will probably be few, and far between. The program allows you to update, add, delete, sort, find, or export records and fields in your database. There are facilities for using database information in other programs such as VISICALC, MAIL-MERGE, or WORDSTAR. These capabilities somewhat make up for the lack of a good report writer feature in PC-FILE. This application is marketed under the Freeware concept. This means that if you like the program and find it helpful to you that you might consider sending the author \$35 for his efforts.

REVIEW: NICE

This is a printer enhancement program designed to produce several distinctive new fonts on your Epson Printer. It was recently downloaded from a non-local BBS.

This is a pretty nifty little application. The program is run before you wish to output your printed material. Once activated, the default font is Roman, in 10 pitch. Five other fonts may be software selected. These are:

1. Sans Serif
2. Orator
3. Script ( nice looking font )
4. Old English
5. Computer Printout

Also supported is BOLD, *ITALIC*, COMPRESSED, <sup>SUPERSCRIPT</sup>, ELITE, and <sub>SUBSCRIPT</sub>, etc. In other words:

All, or nearly all of the features of the Epson are supported. I found that the Epson Manual was a good guide to using the new fonts. You may select these fonts from inside your word-processor by imbedding the proper control codes within your text. If your word-processor is unable to generate the Escape character, there is another method provided to allow you to use the codes from the keyboard. In either case, if you right-justify your text, you will probably have to pad with spaces to compensate for these additional codes.

In all, it seems to be an easy-to-use method of increasing your Epson printers' capabilities. The Fonts are clean and quite legible, although the output speed of your printer is cut in half while these fonts are in use. I have used the program with WORDSTAR, and found that they are good companions.

## TECHNICAL WRITERS

We now have these writers contributing informational columns for our newsletter.

Mark McNee  
Programmer/Technician

Mike Hayhurst  
Lead Systems Programmer

Rich Brown  
Systems Analyst

Judy Robinett  
Statehouse

We are very fortunate to have these folks donating their expertise to our PC group.

Mike Hayhurst and Mark McNee have taken this month off, but we can expect their columns in our next issue.

### ----- \*\*\* T H A N K S \*\*\*

We would like to thank Computer Concepts and Tim Mead for offering us the use of their building for our last meeting. They are located on Capital across from Julia Davis park.

### ----- LOCAL BBS PHONE LIST

The following is a list of some local BBS's. They are not all IBM computers running them, though Gem State Data Access is.

Gem State Data Access	375-2243
Free Spirit BBS	362-3623
C.C.U.B.B. (Caldwell)	454-8421
C-64 BUG BBS (6pm-6am)	362-3468

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### NOT SO LOCAL BBS PHONE LIST

Gaithersburg, Maryland	(301) 428-7931
Sunnyvale, California	(408) 735-7190
Fargo, North Dakota	(701) 293-5973
Pirates Bay	(415) 775-2384
The Shining Sun	(305) 273-0020

## OUR PUBLICATIONS LIBRARY Written By Richard Chambers

I've managed to get our Periodical Library Started. At the Present, we have the following copies available for loan:

### BYTE:

Vol 9 # 5,10,11,12,13  
Vol 10# 1,2,3,4,5  
PC:  
Vol 3 # 4  
Vol 4 # 4,6,7,12,13,14,15

### PC WORLD:

January, April

### CREATIVE COMPUTING:

Vol 10# 11,12  
Vol 11# 3,4,5,6

If you have any of the BYTE PC, PC WORLD, or CREATIVE COMPUTING issues that we are missing (and you don't mind parting with them), we'd sure like to include them in our publications library. So, instead of trashing them, bring them to the meeting, or call me--and I will come and get them. We will then make them available for members to check-out and read.

In addition, we have started a subscription to EXCHANGE. This is a monthly magazine, published by IBM, which is directed towards user groups such as ours. This seems to be a rather comprehensive publication, touching upon software, computing theory, troubleshooting, new products, and even an "Ask IBM" section. There are also programs and articles written by members of other computer user groups throughout the nation. Looks like it will be a nice addition to our publications library. Also, IBM has started sending us information sheets on hardware and software updates and other enhancements. I will start putting these sheets into a three-ring binder and we will have this source of information also available for loan to our members.

\*\*\*\*\* MODEM QUESTIONNAIRE \*\*\*\*\*

If you are interested in purchasing a modem in the near future, complete the form below and return it to The Idaho IBM-PC Users Group, P.O. Box 9136, Boise, Idaho 83707. As our membership grows, so does our buying power so always check with the group before making any major purchases.

FIRST NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ LAST NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

WISH TO BUY A MODEM YES  NO  ONLY IF PRICE <=

\*\*\*\*\* WHAT MODEM OPTIONS DO YOU DESIRE \*\*\*\*\*

SPEED: 2400bps  1200bps  300bps  OTHER

ASYNCHRONOUS  SYNCHRONOUS  AUTO-DIAL  AUTO-ANSWER

INTERNAL CARD MODEM  EXTERNAL MODEM

\*\*\*\*\* WHAT TYPE OF PC DO YOU HAVE \*\*\*\*\*

IBM PC/JR  IBM PC  IBM PC/XT  IBM PORTABLE

WANG PC  COLUMBIA  COMPAQ  LEADING EDGE

APPLE II  APPLE II/E  APPLE II/C  APPLE III

OTHER